

Fairfax County Youth Leadership Alumni News

Class of 2005-2006 Graduation

The Fairfax County Youth Leadership Program (YLP) conducted its graduation ceremony for the Class of 2005-06 on January 25th. This program included one of YLPs largest classes with 41 participants. Students shared some of the more memorable moments of the program and of their internships with family members in attendance and with one another. Eileen Noonan, the new teacher coordinator for YLP, and Cynthia Szwajkowski welcomed graduates and their families to the ceremony. Ms. Noonan elicited comments that painted a broad picture of what this program has meant for students.

Gerry Connolly, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, talked to students about the importance of county

government and of programs such as YLP. County Executive Anthony Griffin, who has consistently supported the YLP program and made internships available to students, stressed the importance of youth leadership and involvement in county government. This year, the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jack Dale, also spoke at graduation in support of the program. In 2005, Dr. Dale personally addressed YLP participants about Fairfax County Public Schools and fielded a wide array of student questions. Mr. Connolly, Mr. Griffin and Dr. Dale issued diplomas and mementos to students.

YLP participants personally thanked Susan Datta, Martha Reed, Molly Cooper and Trish Walker for all of the work that the County does to provide



Kate McFarland receives her certificate from Chairman Gerry Connolly, County Executive Anthony Griffin, and Superintendent Dr. Jack Dale.

meaningful exposure to the work of County agencies and to providing enlightening internships.

Graduates were able to enjoy one another's company, hopefully not for the last time, over a buffet provided by the County. Pictures from this graduation and those of years past are available on the website at:

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/FCYLP.htm>.

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December Youth Leadership Reunion

The Fairfax County Youth Leadership Program (YLP) hosted its first alumni function on December 19, 2005. In a small and informal get-together at the Government Center, graduates from each of the YLP classes (2001-2006) shared some munchies, memories of YLP moments and internships, and some stories about where they are in life today. "Old-timers" with the program such as Ms. Datta, Ms. Reed, Dr. Szwajkowski and teacher-sponsor George Knight welcomed familiar YLP faces in what is hoped to be the first of

many alumni functions. YLP alumni representatives included Helen Chen, Pat McCafferty, Kristen Wasilko, Deborah Perl, Andy Howlett, Ken Anderson, Diana Nguyen, Janice Wong, Sammy Dhaliwal, Elizabeth Cole, Rebecca Jugo, Sophia Aziz and Elaine Filadelfo. Their current endeavors include study at Princeton, UVA, Miami University of Ohio, Virginia Tech, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Cornell University. Indeed, the next level of education or experience is in the offing for

our first graduation class: Sammy Dhaliwal has been accepted to medical school. It was great to discover where life has taken students from the program and we hope to be able to reconnect with more of you.

Just as students during the YLP program could not wait to hear about which internships were available for the summer, YLP graduates clearly had the new college internship possibility on their minds. Ms. Datta detailed some of the agencies in need of YLP college students

this summer. The County will fund four of these positions for the summer of 2006 for eight weeks beginning June 5, 2006 to July 28, 2006. While the high-school internships generally incorporated some fun, touring and/or educational days, agencies hope to get a great deal of work from their college interns. The internship is project-based work in a number of Fairfax County Agencies. Pay is \$16.00 per hour.

Ideas flowed at the reunion function about how the YLP

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December Youth Leadership Reunion (continued)

program might continue to assist graduates. In future editions of this newsletter, we hope to provide job lists, job exchanges, tips for interviewing and for resumes. Alumni cooked up ideas to showcase networking opportunities which may be as simple, yet sublime, as a bowling reunion party. In addition, YLP grads and current participants talked about ways in which they could "give back" to the program. Students offered their services to mentor incoming YLP participants so they wouldn't

experience the "bowled over" moment that so many 16-year-olds suffered upon walking into that first YLP meeting. They remembered how it felt to be overwhelmed in a situation full of county dignitaries and very impressive fellow participants from across the County. YLP grads also noted that they would have very much appreciated more information about the various internships from a student perspective before they were asked to choose their internships. Several alumni offered to write about their experiences for

future newsletters and to be included in the list of summer internships given to current YLP representatives. If you would like to be a part of any of these activities or mentorship opportunities, please contact:

Molly Cooper at:
(Molly.Cooper@fairfaxcounty.gov)

or Cynthia Szwajkowski at:
(Cynthia.Szwajkowski@fcps.edu)

An overriding theme arose from the reunion: The Youth Leadership Program can continue to impact the goals of its participants, past and

present. It is the goal of the new alumni portion of the program to provide a forum to exchange opportunities, connections, goals and aspirations. We would love to hear from all YLP alumni in the near future, whether it is through an application to the new college internship program or through ideas on how to reconnect and how to help each other and the program. In addition, if you are still in contact with fellow participants, please email their addresses to us so we can broaden our outreach.

YLP Graduate Updates

Nada Shawish

2003 YLP Graduate

Exams, studying, exams and more studying! That's the first thing that comes to mind when asked "what's up?" being in my second year of a long and trying pre-medical track! Although, college life for yours truly is much, much more busy and bustling than even that! I currently work in the Community Living and Learning Center, (better known as the CLLC around here!) on The George Washington University's Foggy Bottom Campus smack dab in the middle of Washington, D.C.. Aside from the meet and greet, "CLLC is at your service!" aspect of the job, I do think it's a position that entails so much more. CLLC is an important part of the University because we serve as the "student help hub" so to speak. We provide a service to students by students in order to help them and ourselves better succeed in both of our University experiences.

I remember learning from YLP how important it is to lead, but also how important it is to listen! This give and take relationship is something I've come to know well working in the CLLC, where we learn from other students just as much as we provide them with the support they need. New surprises each day, a steady flow of new faces, and the opportunity to be an influential part of our peers lives,

What could be better? I'm happy to say I'm doing well in my classes, even though the course load has been pretty heavy and at times trying. Thinking back to YLP, I learned to set daily goals, and well as long-term ones, and that reaching those goals depended on my focus, determination, and organization, things that I definitely apply to my studies and have helped me stay on track.

Being in the city, Washington, D.C. provides an unavoidable interest and involvement in politics. For me, being an Arab-American during a difficult time for the United States, has not been a thing possible to ignore. As an Arab-American, it has been difficult, but determining to be a part of such an influential period of history. Having been born and raised in the diversely populated Fairfax County, I believe I have a obligation to my community to defeat the stereotypes imposed upon Arab-Americans today, and to definitely promote tolerance within the community, not only for fellow Arab-Americans, but for all races and nationalities that we are so lucky to have as a part of this community. I'm involved in Imagine-Life, an organization founded on the bases of human rights and awareness. I love this organization and what it has done because of the unity it brings to youth within the community, and for their determination to make a difference.

I also try to stay connected to my ancestral roots, having grown up in a heavily cultured home, I have a definite connection to my heritage and am proud of it. SJP of GW provides a tolerant voice for the Palestinian people in the United States and abroad, and also promotes awareness

about the struggles of the Arab-American community at this time. It also unifies first generation Americans like myself, and suggests a cooperation towards understanding.

On another note, although I do hope to be a Pediatrician one day, (should I survive the studious life of a medical student!) I am also an English major with a Creative Writing minor in GW's Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. I have always had a love for writing stories, reading literature, (Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is my absolute favorite!) and so to be able to pursue that interest is a joy! I hope to apply for the English Honors Program in the coming year, and hopefully be able to take my long-loved hobby to the next level and write about my experiences as an Arab-American in a professional writing career after my undergraduate studies. I specifically want to continue a heart felt dream of equality, one that we all hope for the United States.

All that having been said, my best and love to the YLP, as they have been a program I continuously refer back to as an ultimate professional experience. One that has taught me so much, but above all, that nothing is impossible.

Lauren Spratt

2004 YLP Graduate

Life has been busy – and good – since I graduated from the YLP in 2004. Things went well my senior year at WT Woodson High School. Even though I suffered a leg injury, I was able to run the outdoor track season. Being accepted early decision at

YLP Graduate Updates *(continued)*

the University of Delaware was the best though. I just couldn't wait to go to college! My family and I enjoyed a vacation in Cancun right after graduation. That was a great way to relax after the hectic week of graduation activities. Then it was time to get back to the real world. I worked two jobs during the rest of the summer (spending money for school, of course). I just couldn't wait to leave for college in late August. I now have a new appreciation for air conditioning (my dorm has no air conditioning) and elevators (my room is on the 4th floor with no elevators)! At the University of Delaware I am majoring in Elementary Education with a minor in Middle School Math Education, on the Dean's List, and a member of the Varsity Women's Track and Field Team. (I also ran in the Army 10-Miler this past fall (which surprisingly turned out to be 11.2 miles) and I still had a personal best time. Recently I had 12 inches of my hair cut off and donated it to Locks of Love, a charity that accepts donations of hair and provides hairpieces to children under age 18 suffering from long-term medical conditions. It feels strange to have short hair but I know it was for a good cause. Looking back over the last year or so, I can honestly say that I have had some very positive experiences and am proud of my accomplishments.

Mindy Peng

2003 YLP Graduate

Mindy was just accepted into the McIntire School of Commerce at UVA. Also, for this summer in May, she was hired to teach English at ChongQing Southwest University for a month in their Summer-Intensive Language Program.

She said "thanks for such an awesome experience with YLP because it allowed me to make so many new friends. Whenever Malcolm and I see each other around school, we always laugh over those fun summer experiences interning at the Fairfax County Government Center."

Puja Deverkonda

2004 YLP Graduate

Puja is a junior at Mount Holyoke College, majoring in International Relations and German Studies. She wrote that she is not

exactly sure what she'd like to do when she graduates except change the world!

In January, 2006, she shared this update:

I'm studying in Hong Kong for the 2005-2006 academic year. It's been a really great year so far. Hong Kong is really unique in that it's a diverse city racially, culturally, and geographically (beaches and sprawling country clubs are found within Hong Kong itself, less than half an hour away from the city center). Having grown up in Fairfax County, I always thought I lived in a fairly populous and urban area, but since coming to Hong Kong, I've felt like a country mouse on several occasions! However, locals have been extremely gracious in helping me acclimate to my new environment. All in all, I've been enjoying Cantonese-Chinese food while using the incredible public transportation system to get out and explore this vibrant city. I'm sad half my year is over, but look forward to more exciting experiences, including celebrating Chinese New Year this January!

Philip L. Deneault

2005 YLP Graduate

As a freshman I am taking a number of business courses at the University of Virginia and am preparing my application for the School of Commerce where I hope to major in Finance. Since coming to UVA, I have been able to gain many new friends and become closer with some other YLP participants from my year that I did not get to know very well since our internships took us to different locations over the summer. One former YLP 2005 graduate is in the volunteer group Adaptive Ski for the Madison House program here at UVA with me and we helped to teach physically disabled and mentally handicapped adults and kids how to enjoy skiing using special equipment such as outriggers and sit down skis. Aside from that volunteer work I am involved in the Student Run Honor Committee here at the University where I currently serve as an educator. I also play on the Club Ultimate Frisbee team and get to travel to other colleges such as Duke and Chapel Hill to play in tournaments all spring. The activity apart from classes that probably takes up most of my time however is my job as a student assistant for a Neuro-Ophthalmologist at

the medical school on campus. Here, along with my clerical responsibilities, I am learning a great deal about computer usage and am currently undertaking an IT project to update a patient record database. Since coming to the University of Virginia, I have been amazed by the opportunities to pursue knowledge and acquire skills beyond the classroom in the form of a job, clubs, volunteer work and sports participation. I believe that I am taking full advantage of what college has to offer and think that everyone who attends college should do the same.

Thomas (Tom) A. Egeland, Jr.

2004 YLP Graduate

Tom is currently a sophomore, majoring in Economics and Commerce, at Hampden-Sydney College in Farmville, VA. Tom was recently appointed to the Men of Principle Chair in Beta Theta Pi Fraternity. During his internship with the YLP, Tom worked in the County Executive's Office where he spent one week in the Department of Information Technology and two weeks shadowing the County Executive and his staff. Tom's internship opened his eyes to the far reaching responsibilities of a county government and gave him direction in college. Just recently, during a weekend trip back home, Tom applied the knowledge he gained in working in DIT, to helping a neighbor navigate the County's website in his search for understanding his soaring property tax bill. Since Tom's senior year in high school, he has worked at Radio Shack as a Sales Representative during breaks from school.

David Chang

2003 YLP Graduate

I am currently a rising junior at Johns Hopkins University. I am pursuing a bachelor's of science in Biomedical Engineering and Applied Math, with a minor in Entrepreneurship and Management. I have worked in a biology laboratory on campus for over a year. I am also involved in fundraising for Habitat for Humanity, and mentor a number of freshmen in a minority mentoring program. My work in the Health Department in the Youth Leadership Program helped me on my way to laboratory work, and gave me invaluable work experience.

Make Sure You are on the YLP Contact List

Please e-mail your most up-to-date information to:

molly.cooper@fairfaxcounty.gov

Please include your name, high school, school you currently attend, current address, email and phone number.

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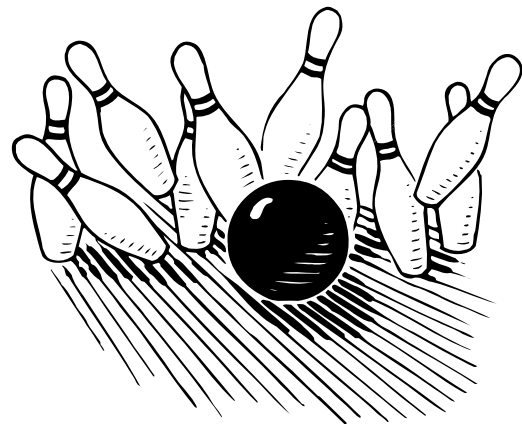
**[http://
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/
dmb/FCYLP.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/FCYLP.htm)**

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Summer 2006 Alumni YLP Bowling Party

Several YLP Alumni expressed an interest in getting together this summer just for fun. Here it is:

Please join us for YLP bowling on June 14 at 7:30 p.m. at Bowl America in Chantilly. You will be treated to 2 games of bowling (and shoes!) and good company with your fellow alums! We know that you are a fun group so let's get together!



Bowl America is located at 4525 Stonecroft Blvd., Chantilly 20151 (703)830-2695.

Please r.s.v.p. by email – Cynthia.szwajkowski@fcps.edu by June 10th.

